

80 London Road
London
SE1 6LH

June 2021

Dear <name>,

We are writing to you because we think you are taking a medicine called valproate.

Valproate can also be called other names, so see the list below:

- Valproate
- Sodium valproate
- Semisodium valproate
- Valproic acid
- Epilim®
- Epilim Chrono®
- Epilim Chronosphere®
- Episenta®
- Epival®
- Belvo®
- Convulex®
- Depakote®
- Dyzantil®
- Convulex®
- Orlept®
- Syonell®

You must have a review of your treatment every year.

Do not stop taking your valproate unless you have spoken to your doctor or nurse. If you stop taking it, your condition might get worse.

Important information you should know:

If you take valproate when you are pregnant, it can harm your baby in two ways:

- Birth defects when the baby is born.
- Problems with development and learning, including being late in learning to walk and talk, lower intelligence than other children of the same age, and memory problems as the child grows up.

It is important that you do not get pregnant while you are taking valproate. If you are between 12 and 55 years old, you must use contraception. You must use it even if you are not having sex unless your doctor agrees you do not need to.

What you should do:

If you have not had a review of your treatment in the past year

- Keep taking your valproate.
- Keep using contraception.
- Make an appointment with your doctor or nurse specialist as soon as possible.
- Tell them you need to speak to them about whether valproate is still the best medicine for you.

If you are pregnant, or think you might be:

- Keep taking your valproate until you talk to your doctor. If you stop taking it, your condition might get worse. This might harm your baby.
- Make an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible.
- Tell them you are pregnant and taking valproate.

If you want to try for a baby:

- Keep taking your valproate until you talk to your doctor.
- Keep using contraception.
- Make an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible.
- Tell them you need to speak to them about valproate and pregnancy.

If you are not using contraception that has been specially recommended for you because you are taking valproate (ideally a coil or an implant):

- Keep taking your valproate.
- Keep using contraception.
- Make an appointment with your doctor or sexual health clinic as soon as possible.
- Tell them you need to speak to them about pregnancy prevention and valproate.

We are writing to every woman and girl aged 12 and over who takes valproate.

If you cannot possibly become pregnant because you are too young, too old or some other reason, we are sorry if this letter has upset you.

If you have any questions about this letter, please visit this webpage:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/sodium-valproate/>

Yours sincerely,



Dr Aidan Fowler
National Director of Patient Safety and
Deputy Chief Medical Officer
NHS England and Improvement



Professor Steve Powis
National Medical Director
NHS England and Improvement